



**ADAPT COMMENTS ON  
Working Draft 3/21/05  
RAISING THE DESIGN STANDARDS IN AUSTIN, TX**

**Austin has on many occasions affirmed its commitment to quality of life for ALL its citizens and visitors, including people with disabilities. Recently, however, there have been several significant "misunderstandings" regarding access for people with disabilities in newer development projects. Therefore, ADAPT believes these standards should include language of intent to include persons with disabilities and to follow federal, state and local access requirements.**

**Other areas of concern:**

**Throughout the standards/working draft there are references to limiting the number of curb cuts. Curb cuts are vital to people with mobility impairments, and are in fact preferred by almost any pedestrian. They should not be limited. Connectivity, for us, includes curb cuts.**

**Sidewalks need to be accessible with curb cuts, and unobstructed paths wide enough for travel. Possible obstructions in the path of travel this type of development should avoid are:**

- Furniture from stores, restaurants, etc.
- Trees, poles and awning poles
- Other design elements and natural elements

**Another possible type of obstruction in the path of travel includes signs, hanging plants, and other objects hanging the path of travel that a person with a visual impairment (using a cane, etc.) might walk into.**

**Entrances should have no steps.**

**We are concerned that limiting parking and drive through areas can negatively affect people with mobility impairments, including people with heart and lung disabilities. You need to consider this impact more in your plan.**

**The parking limits should not limit accessible parking requirements of the ADA, etc.**

**Driveways and allies must have curb cuts if there are sidewalks.**

**We strongly support your support of sidewalks! (for example g on page 14)**

**Use of alternatives to standard sidewalk and paving materials (pervious concrete, some pavers, grass-crete, etc.) is a big concern for us because these can be access and**

safety issues. They can cause tripping and falling. Some can work when done right, but often they are NOT done right. This needs more attention.

We love trees and shade but in addition to being placed in the path of travel, which is one problem, they can also ruin sidewalks with their roots, over time. This needs to be addressed at the start.

Landscaping is beautiful but when plants, especially painful plants, grow out into the pedestrian walkways it becomes decidedly unfriendly. Landscaping needs to plan for this problem beyond hoping someone will cut it back.

Vertical mixed used developments should allow for maximum accessibility for people with disabilities and if there is a conflict, points for access should outweigh points for other types of design goals. This has been a problem in the past here in Austin.

Playgrounds and recreation areas need to be accessible.

Signage requirements should include something about signage indicating where access for people with disabilities is provided. This is almost never done and is vital.

The language on the accessible ADA route and trash, utility, etc. placement is confusing to us and seems to imply the ADA route is not important to the City. If that is correct, that is wrong and should be either clarified or changed.

One final thing not mentioned is the apparently popular trend of including waterways in the plazas and sidewalks (like at the new city hall and the Whole Foods megaplex). Without edging on these features people with visual impairments (and people not paying attention) can walk into the water and be hurt. This should be addressed.